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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3624
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RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 6171
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 5286
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ PRIORITY 1797
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 0006
RUEHMU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA PRIORITY 1072
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 3627
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0622
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 1871
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY 0878
RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0013
RUEHMI/USOFFICE FRC FT LAUDERDALE PRIORITY 2914
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0573

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 000735

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ELAB](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#)

SUBJECT: NATIONAL RESISTANCE COMMAND READIES ABSTENTIONIST
LINE

REF: A. CARACAS 01913

[1](#)B. CARACAS 00205

[1](#)C. 2005 CARACAS 3223

Classified By: Robert Downes, Political Counselor,
for Reason 1.4(b).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) The opposition group National Resistance Command (CNR) is organizing nationwide to force a political crisis related to the December presidential elections, according to CNR leaders. If demands for transparent elections are not met by June 3 (at which time election law would require closure of the electoral registry), CNR plans to mount demonstrations. CNR's current objectives are to organize committees at the state level, transmit an attractive message for Venezuela's disaffected voters, develop a viable political alternative to the Bolivarian model, and mobilize people for street action when appropriate. This last point seems the only actionable point by CNR leaders, whose frustrations appear to outweigh their political wisdom. Given widespread mistrust of the electoral system, however, we cannot rule out that CNR would be able to mount a sizable march in June. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) National Resistance Command leaders Oscar Perez and Helen Fernandez met with Poloff March 17 (refs a and b). The CNR is the movement associated with journalist Patricia Poleo (currently in semi-exile in Miami) and retired Cardinal Rosalio Castillo Lara (ref c).

Organizing For Street Action

[1](#)3. (C) Perez said the CNR is busy organizing chapters in several states, claiming an outpouring of interest in the areas he has visited, including among the Venezuelan poor. Perez said they are developing small committees of seven people to lead CNR activities at the state level. He said the objective is to organize people for a nationwide

demonstration on June 3, six months before the December 3 presidential election. Perez explained that Venezuelan electoral law requires the National Electoral Council (CNE) to close the electoral registry, which he was sure the CNE would fail to do. Perez said the CNR would begin a public countdown on April 29 to educate the public about this requirement. Fernandez emphasized that the theme of the June 3 march would be transparency in elections; pro-participation, not abstention.

CNR's Strategic Objectives

¶4. (C) Perez said CNR has four lines of action. First, they are organizing people at the grassroots, as described above. Perez said they plan to swear in some 600 volunteers for the Caracas area within days. Second, CNR wants to work out a message that appeals to Venezuela's disaffected voters, especially the poor. Specifically, CNR wants to emphasize social ills made worse by President Hugo Chavez like unemployment, corruption, and inefficiency. Third, Fernandez said the group wants to develop a viable political alternative to Chavez. Pressed for details, Fernandez said none of the current opposition pre-candidates for the December elections were desirable. She believed a new candidate would emerge at the right moment in the coming months. Fourth, Perez said CNR wanted to be ready to mobilize people to "take to the streets" when the appropriate moment came.

¶5. (C) Perez and Fernandez said they needed funding and

CARACAS 00000735 002 OF 002

advisors to accomplish these objectives and asked whether USG funding was available. Poloff explained that that was impossible, and observed that an organization with genuine popular support would not need foreign funding. Perez said fear of government reprisal keeps Venezuelans from contributing to opposition organizations. Poloff asked the point of establishing an organization dedicated solely to mounting mass demonstrations. Fernandez said Chavez would never concede to fair and transparent elections. Perez said the objective would be to force a political crisis like that of 2002 that would obligate Chavez to sit at the table and negotiate with the opposition for fair elections. Fernandez hoped such a crisis would provoke international intervention.

Comment

¶6. (C) As an organization, the CNR is angry and politically naive. Like many in the opposition, theirs is a "Hail Mary" plan to force a crisis and leave it to others to sort out -- the triple bank shot necessary to turn the crisis into an ouster of Chavez. This is the mentality that an opposition candidate will have to combat if they expect to get all potential opposition voters to the polls in December. We note, too, that the CNR was a key organizer of the successful opposition march of January 22. It is possible, therefore, they could bring about a similar march for June 3.

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